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Creation

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QUARTERLY



CREATION SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES SOCIETY

The Creation Social Science and Humanities Society (CSSHS) was incorporated in Wichita, Kansas, in 1977. The CSSHS is educational, and will promote and disseminate information on the implications of the Biblical creation model of origins for the social sciences and humanities, with emphasis on the development of these disciplines in accordance with the rapidly emerging and increasingly well established natural scientific models of Biblical creation.

The **Quarterly Journal** is directed toward teachers and students of the social sciences and humanities, especially in institutions of higher learning. The CSSHS may also publish books, monographs, and other writings, and sponsor speakers, seminars, and research projects related to its educational purpose.

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers:

When the apostle Peter spoke to the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41), he began by pointing out the prophetic significance of what was occurring and bridged directly to the Gospel. The Scripture tells us that three thousand accepted the message and were baptized. The Jews gathered at Pentecost had the foundation of "In the beginning God created" and "Let us make man in our image" well established. The soil of their hearts and minds was well prepared to receive the Gospel.

When Paul spoke to the Greeks at Athens, he began with creation. He knew that, unlike the Jews, the soil of the Greeks' hearts and minds was not plowed and prepared with the knowledge of creation as laid out in Genesis. Paul's progress was slow and the work hard, but Paul knew it was necessary, for the seeds of the Gospel will only prosper in soil that is fertile and good. To one who accepts the truth of God as Creator, Jesus Christ may become a stumbling block because of the sinful inclination toward works and legalism, but to the evolutionist, who rejects God as Creator, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is foolishness (I Cor. 1:23).

The work of creation-evangelism as carried out by this ministry and others around the world is vital. We need prayers, support and encouragement from the rest of the body. I know there is much physical and emotional suffering in the world that is crying to be addressed, and we cannot neglect this central aspect of our Christian calling. But neither can we neglect the battle for the mind. Creation evangelists strive daily around the world to deliver the souls of men from the grip of the greatest lie and false religion of our day, evolution. Having prepared the soil, they also plant the seed of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray for them. Help them. Love them.

Paul D. Ackerman

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Dear Friends:

Referring to your quarterly Vol. VII, No. 4 (Summer 1985) and to R.G. Elmendorf's letter and comment. I stand right behind him concerning the matter of the 2M system. There is no need for compromise with evolution. The Lord Jesus said, "Ye shall receive the Holy Spirit and He will *guide* you into all truth." The early Christians were ready to meet death (not that they wanted it I am sure) but because the Father's house was so real to them and their experience of being in Christ Jesus that they defied kings and all who persecuted them as well as heralding the good news made them bold to contend earnestly for the faith.

This is what I feel we should be doing. Heralding it from the street corner, through the press, through the media. Get evolution out of the schools, universities, seminaries and wherever else it is being taught. When I see all the havoc it (evolution) has done both in our churches, society, industry, economics, youth and science I am outraged. Yes, I know we must manifest love, humility, and meekness but at the same time, we must, as the Greek word "contend" suggests, roll up our sleeves and fight. Not with sword or spear or tanks but with wisdom, knowledge and kindness.

Thank you R.G. Elmendorf of Bairdford for making yourself known.

In Christ Jesus, Yours,
(Rev.) Albert E. Bennett
P.O. Box 2585
Smithers, B.C.
Canada, VOJ 2N0

Dear Editor:

I was happy to see your reprint of William Stanmeyer's *Fidelity* article "Screwtape on Devilution" in your journal. In your statement citing our permission to reprint the article, you describe *Fidelity* as a magazine "addressed to traditional Catholics." *Fidelity* is addressed to all Catholics; indeed it is written from a Catholic point of view and addressed to anyone interested in contemporary social issues. It also has no connection with the Society of Pius X or with Archbishop Lefebvre.

I'd appreciate your sharing this clarification with your readers.

All the best,
E. Michael Jones
Fidelity
206 Marquette Ave.
South Bend, IN 46617

Dear Editor:

I am starting my fourth semester down here teaching at the Colegio Teológico Wesleyano. It has been an interesting experience. For one thing, the concerns are different from those in the States. As you may know, Dr. Gish was down here a few years ago. I know the Puerto Rican director of the Cruzada Estudiantil y Profesional para Cristo who was his host and one of my students at the Colegio attended the meetings. They say this doesn't go over as it does in the States. A Korean educator, speaking for the Far East, says the same:

Western evangelical theological schools emphasize the inerrancy of the Scriptures . . . But this is not a major issue in Asia. Rather, the prevalent areas of concern here are poverty, suffering, injustice, Communism, and non-Christian religions. (*Pulse*, Nov. 21, 1984).

I assume from the rest of the article that the author and the Christians for whom he is speaking are orthodox, and are concerned with inerrancy, but are too busy trying to apply the Scriptures to their difficult problems to spend all their time talking about it. Having been in West Africa, I think I understand. I have spent quite a bit of time down here studying Liberation Theology in Spanish and English, and feel that my fellow Americans should get concerned too.

Yours in His service,
Ed Coleson
Manuel Texidor #1450
Santiago Iglesias
Rio Piedras, PR 00921

Dear Editor:

We are sending you our first number of "Ciencia y Creacion." We believe that it will be of blessing to the Spanish-speaking people, and in this same month we plan to publish our second number. We will also make some improvements on it, and maybe we will include some translation of your wonderful "Creation, Social Science and Humanities" Quarterly. We really want to congratulate you for your nice work in publishing it because it's very useful with students of such areas like psychology, philosophy, literature, etc. So we encourage you to continue serving the Lord Jesus as you have been doing.

We also want to put the publication of "Ciencia y Creacion" to the orders of all the Spanish-speaking people of the United States.

Thanks again, and may our Lord, Savior and Creator continue blessing you all!

Yours in Christ,
Miguel Yapor. O
Apt. #1759-A
Chihuahua, Chih, Mexico

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christian Media and Arts Videotapes

Our Christian civilization long ago outstripped all its predecessors and contemporaries in terms of art and communications. Yet, in recent decades, the media and the arts seem to have been captured by the idolaters of totalitarianism, and persons hostile to both the traditions and values of Christendom.

This apparent victory, however though it may seem a mile wide, is really only an inch deep. Polls and surveys, as well as everyday experience, indicate that Christians (who by definition comprise individuals of all races, ethnic descent and both sexes) constitute an overwhelming majority of Western artists in all media.

Since no civilization can survive that seeks to thwart the great majority in its expression of art and information, Chalcedon has launched an annual seminar to enable Christian artists operating in journalism, the theater, music, painting, sculpture and the arts generally, to meet one another, to listen to professional practitioners, and to inspire a Christian Reconstruction in the fields of their interest.

The first seminar was held in October 1983 in Sacramento, California and attracted over 250 persons. An album of audio cassettes of that program is still available.

Last autumn the Chalcedon Foundation decided to have its second Conference on the Media & the Arts videotaped by a professional company in order to offer videotapes to its friends in the arts, in academia, in the media, and to Christians throughout the world.

The decision was made primarily so that the message of this conference would not be confined to those who could attend, but could be made permanent through the miracle of modern technology and thus circulated throughout our worldwide audience.

For further information and order forms write to:

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List of Available Monographs

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. Creationism is for Catholics | \$10.00 |
| March 1984, 105 pages. | |
| A rebuttal to the resource paper, "Catholics and Crea- | |

- tionism," Vicariate for Education, Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, November, 1984.
2. Abortion: Murder and the New Politics, \$ 2.00
January 1985, 8 pages.
A rebuttal to the speech, "Religious Belief and Public Morality: A Catholic Governor's Perspective," Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, *Notre Dame Magazine*, Autumn 1984.
 3. Does Chemical Evolution Explain the Origin of Life? \$ 3.00
April 1985, 12 pages.
A rebuttal to, "Chemical evolution and the Origin of Life," Prof. Richard E. Dickerson, *Scientific American* September 1978.
 4. Is the Universe Accidental? \$ 4.00
July 1985, 17 pages.
A rebuttal to, "The Accidental Universe," Prof. James S. Trefil, *Science Digest*, June 1984.

Leonardo Boff and the Latin American Liberation Theology Movement

*J. Scott Horrell**

Franciscan professor Leonardo Boff has recently been placed center-stage in the Latin American liberation theology movement. More so than other Brazilian liberationists such as Rubem Alves, Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop Evaristo Arns, Hugo Assmann and Paulo Freire, Leonardo Boff increasingly dominates the movement theologically in the largest Roman Catholic country in the world. A prolific author, Boff has penned over thirty books and a multitude of articles, totalling well over one hundred editions in at least six languages. As a professor at the Faculdade de Filosofia e teologia dos Franciscanos in Petropolis, Rio de Janeiro, Leonardo Boff, together with his brother Clodovis,¹ represents an intellectual avant-garde of liberationists with an impressive train of followers and supporters. In the last several years, Leonardo's works have begun in quantity to be translated into English. Almost certainly more will be seen on the North American market in the decade ahead.² Evangelical thinkers, therefore, will want to be aware of Leonardo Boff's theological starting points — unique to him in some respects, but more generally representative of an increasingly sophisticated liberation theology.

I. Boff's Theological Method

As Emilio Nuñez observes, "liberation theology is a new method of doing theology,"³ combining biblical paradigms with a Marxist sociological analysis. Consonant with most liberationists, Boff declares that all theology is built upon two foundations, the one of faith and the other of social reality.⁴ By engaging the linguistic, philological and sociological tools of modern criticism, theology exegetes in the most rigorous manner possible the biblical text, and then interprets such data hermeneutically and philosophically.⁵ For Boff, theology becomes the intellectual savior of faith, producing the light of synthesis between primitive faith and modern conditions.

On the other hand, however, extending his Thomistic heritage, Boff clarifies that the social conditions of Latin America are themselves the historical revelation of God. Rational Christian belief per se is but "an initiation to the Christian experience."⁶ Therefore, theology becomes above all else an invitation to historical action: "definitive salvation and eschatology are mediated through the liberations of history."⁷ The defining elements of authentic Christianity are not dogmatic but experiential, ethical and social. Consequently, a

*J. Scott Horrell is a doctoral candidate at Dallas Theological Seminary and has served for several years as Worldteam missionary to Brazil. The present paper is an abridged version of a longer discussion copyrighted by the author, and is reprinted here with his permission.

Marxist revolutionary movement may, in fact, be more genuinely Christian than a church defending the *status quo*:

For this reason, every time that men — in whatever corner of the earth or under whatever flag — strive to see the cause [of liberation] triumph, they actuate the Gospel and advance the cause of Jesus Christ. It is not necessarily wherever Christianity and evangelization occur that goodness, liberation, justice and brotherhood *ipso facto* exist. Always, however, wherever brotherhood, justice, liberation and goodness occur, there true Christianity becomes concrete and there lives the Gospel —even though it might be under an unnamed different banner.⁸

Theology, Boff maintains, must learn to interpret Christianity as an historical condition, even in what might be called an atheistic state: "What counts and has weight is not the talking of the conscience but the being of reality."⁹ Not surprisingly, then, and more mildly than many, Boff has been laudatory toward the Nicaraguan experiment in liberation,¹⁰ yet cautious about socialistic government systems.¹¹

Leonardo Boff's theological basis, therefore, is a higher critical analysis of biblical faith coupled with a Marxian socio-economic analysis of Latin American conditions. In *Jesus Christ Liberator*, building upon this duality of theological foundations, Boff specifies five ideological shifts away from historic Christian orthodoxy toward a contextualized Latin American faith. Liberation theology stresses the primacy of 1) the *anthropological* over the *ecclesiological*; 2) the *utopian* over the *factual*; 3) the *critical-rational* over the *dogmatic*; 4) the *social* over the *personal*; and 5) *Orthopraxis* over *Orthodoxy*.¹² The purpose of theology is to interpret the will of God today and to translate it into historical, liberating action. As such, anthropological ends are synonymous with theological ends, for God is glorified when humanity can be fully human. Liberation theology, then, is God's prophetic voice to the oppressed people of, if not the earth, at least Latin America.

II. Boff's View of Revelation and Epistemology

Traditional Christianity, according to Boff, exists as a major hindrance to the liberation movement. A religion that comprehends faith as adhesion to revealed truths of Scripture is a "vulgar," outmoded religion for today.¹³ "The revelation of God must not be thought of as miraculous, as if God intervened in the history of the world . . . it must not be represented as an oracle or as a bundle of truths and prefabricated solutions for the problems of the world."¹⁴ The human words of the Bible "do not adequately reveal the divine mystery," and attempting to reduce divinity to biblical articulations does "not let God be God and the mysterious be mysterious."¹⁵ For Leonardo Boff, revelation is many things. One thing it is not, however, is objective, propositional revelation. God has not *spoken*, but *acted*. Any form of Christianity that adheres to the Bible as the propositional Word of God

. . . first of all would be retro-ocular (with eyes turned backwards toward the past) looking toward the focus where salvation interrupted, [believing] the testified facts of Scripture, [trusting] the Word of God as inspired and inerrant, creating Bible courses, developing liturgy, meditating on the Judeo-Christian history of salvation, pushing the faith each time more within the mystery of the faith.¹⁶

If the Bible itself is not the essence of divine revelation, then what is? Boff

responds that the structure of God's revelation is given in life and human history. "Revelation is a mode of considering the unique history we experience by means of the Ultimate Reality . . . The history of salvation is not a history within history, but history itself seen through its Ultimate Sense, revealed as God."¹⁷ Elsewhere Boff declares that "everything that exists is the manifestation of God, is divine theophany, is revelation and the Word of God."¹⁸

Of course, in virtually dissolving special revelation (in any classical sense) and declaring that *everything* is divine theophany, Boff must defend his prophetic passion for liberation from being purely arbitrary. How is good distinguished from evil, justice and grace from oppression and cruelty? In this rather common intellectual quagmire, Boff not so surprisingly shifts epistemological gears and at this point reveals what is the essential nature of his epistemology:

Placed before the social problem, the Christian reacts, shall we say, prophetically, when he detects *in an intuitive way* its contradiction with the divine plan. Poverty offends man and God: it is sin. One must fight for justice and for the rights of the oppressed. This presents itself to him as a human and Christian imperative. At this point his reflection has not been articulated on a critical level, but *on the intuitive, synthetic level*. Nevertheless, this constitutes the true popular theology (of the People of God), with their truth and practicality.¹⁹ (Emphasis mine)

In *O Destino do Homem e do Mundo*, Boff details in existential, crisis terms how "the Feeling that latently is God" arises as a vision and urge within the individual as he comes to understand the profundity and globality of a given situation. By his decisive response, man becomes a hearer of the Word of God, authenticating himself to himself and to the world in which he acts.²⁰ Thus, while at time referring to God as the utterly Transcendent and mysterious Absolute Other,²¹ Boff's definitive orientation is nearly totally immanent, identifying God as the liberating *élan of history, and manifested through, if not synonymous with, the inner conscience of man*.

If God is revealed in man's most meaningful experience and his moral consciousness, then how do we explain sincere human contradiction? When intuitions differ and ideologies clash, can anything be said to be true? Interestingly, Boff addresses the dilemma of relativism by responding that some people misinterpret their basic intuition. He presupposes that intuitions will not disagree, and claims that differences surface because of lack of critical reasoning, misperception of cultural problems and unfortunate education—especially on the part of traditional Roman Catholics.²² Truly our consciences are the vanguard of social morality, but if someone is out of line with socio-ethical consensus (e.g. liberation philosophy), he has been conditioned awry or lacks critical abilities. The arbitrariness of Boff's system is obvious. His only resolve for the problem of subjectivity is the hope of a cultural consensus of intuition.

An explicit result of Boff's epistemology is evolutionary religious relativism: In their most pristine and positive form religions are the institutional forms that translate humanity's relationship with the Absolute . . . Religion itself is already an acceptance of grace. It celebrates an encounter with divinity. Hence, without denigrating any Christian claims, we can say that religions are the ordinary pathways to God.²³

The original experience is only one in all religions. Only its interpretations, its forms of cultural and historical expression, vary and become

typologized from one situation to the next.²⁴

In the end, all truth is historically and culturally relative, conceived through the intuitive expression of man both individually and collectively. In summary, Boff has sought to splice together the empirical epistemology of biblical criticism and sociological science with a prior subjective epistemology of intuition. Moreover, he has sought a solution to the tension between unity and diversity — a difficult yoke for a prophet to bear.

III. Boff's Hermeneutic

In *Jesus Christ Liberator*, his superior academic endeavor, Boff presents a brief history of modern hermeneutics. One immediate observation as Boff summarizes each hermeneutical system is that he seems to adopt each method, building one upon the other. Almost no criticism is given of any of the various hermeneutical theories. Boff seemingly views all of them as valid parts of the whole: "Hermeneutics cannot be taken to mean simply the art of understanding ancient texts; it also means comprehending all manifestations of life and knowing how to relate them to the evangelical message . . ." ²⁵ Thus the liberation hermeneutic returns to the liberationists' basic theological method of interpreting both the testimony of faith and the sociology of history as divine revelation.

It appears that the Bible does not mean *nothing*, but rather *anything*. Boff recognizes the open-endedness of his hermeneutical conditions and seeks to justify his freedom from the very nature of Jesus' own teaching. Jesus was not like other rabbis, pretending to be biblical experts and proof-texting every affirmation. He taught with authority and such sovereignty that he "dispensed with all exegesis and interpretations of the law and would simply retort: ' . . . But I say to you . . . ' " ²⁶ Boff proceeds to adopt what he assumes to be Jesus' free and open hermeneutic. Indeed, quite transparently, he supposes this same messianic authority for himself and the liberation movement:

This necessarily implies a liberation from a certain type of abstract theology constructed in a closed system of concepts. No advance over this theology will be made by mere interpretations of interpretations, but *only through a new experience* and praxis different from the faith and the church. Thus indeed can a liberated theology be born . . . ²⁷ (Emphasis mine)

The language of liberation, as diverse as the ramifications might be, articulates a new optic through which human history both in the present and in the past is interpreted. To think and to act in terms of liberation in politics, in economics, in pedagogy, in religion, in sociology, in medicine, in psychology, in critical ideology, etc. implies a *hermeneutical turn-around and the enthronement of a new state of consciousness*. . . . *Now we live under the dominion of this new age that permits a different reading of the texts and historical contexts of both past and present within the horizon of liberation* or oppression and regression. ²⁸ (Emphasis mine)

Growing concern exists that Leonardo Boff and other liberation theologians have taken too much liberty with the Scriptures. One wonders if a hermeneutical method could ever be conclusively defended, and if it has not become simply a guise to express any intellectual's conceptions. On what basis does Boff deny a different hermeneutic to other Latin Americans — e.g. spiritistic,

monarchical, or even orthodox? If cultural, intuitive consensus is his only response, then in crying out a *messianic* message Boff utterly contradicts his own single standard.

Concluding Remarks

Quite transparently, Leonardo Boff embraces with little reservation the non-absolutist thinking of contemporary man. As such, in his theological method, the two foundations of faith and contemporary culture finally erode to appear very much like only one. Boff's theology, not unlike certain other liberation spokesmen's,²⁹ has become a profound anthropology. Boff's epistemology, for all its appeal to critical rationalism, in the end proves completely subjective. And, in his hermeneutical break-away from "the faith and the Church," Boff prophetically declares a "new state of consciousness" that interprets all things through the optic of liberation. Utopianism has indeed left the factual. Perhaps liberation theology itself needs liberating from its own obsessions, so that it can allow itself to be questioned by Scripture. In the end, the great irony is that, in the name of liberating hope, Boff and the liberation intellectuals have destroyed the gospel of Jesus Christ that alone gives eternal hope to the people of Latin America.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Clodovis Boff has impressive scholastic abilities as evidenced in the densely documented *Teologia e Prática: Teologia do Político e suas mediações* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1978).
- ² Leonardo Boff's books on the English speaking market presently are *The Question of Faith in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971); *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980); *God's Witnesses in the Heart of the World* (Chicago: Claret Center for Spiritual Resources in Spirituality, 1981); *Saint Francis: A Model for Human Liberation* (New York: Crossroads, 1981); *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation* (Melbourne: Dove; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983); *Build Up My Church: Franciscan Inspirations for and from the Third World* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press; 1984); *Salvation and Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984).
- ³ Emilio A. Nuñez, "The Challenge of Liberation Theology," *EMQ* 17:3 (1981):142.
- ⁴ L. Boff, *A Fé na Periferia do Mundo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1978), 7.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ⁶ *Igreja: Carisma e Poder*, p. 32.
- ⁷ *A Vida Religiosa e A Igreja no Processo de Libertação* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1975), p. 24.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- ¹⁰ L. Boff, "Leonardo Boff's Impressions of the Church in Nicaragua," *Ladoc* 13:1 (1982):47-51.
- ¹¹ Cf. Boff's interview, Richard N. Ostling, "Deliberation at the Vatican," *Time* 124:10 (Sept. 3, 1984):86.
- ¹² *Jesus Christ Liberator*, vi, 44-47.
- ¹³ *Teologia do Cativo*, 45-46.
- ¹⁴ *O Destino do Homem e do Mundo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1973), 70-71.

- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- ¹⁶ *A Vida Religiosa*, 67.
- ¹⁷ *O Destino do Homem*, 71-72.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- ¹⁹ *Teologia do Cativoiro*, 31.
- ²⁰ *O Destino do Homem*, 73.
- ²¹ Cf. *Liberating Grace*, 112, 178-183.
- ²² *O Destino do Homem*, 77.
- ²³ *Liberating Grace*, 119-120.
- ²⁴ *O Destino do Homem*, 149.
- ²⁵ *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 41.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- ²⁷ *Teologia do Cativoiro*, 71.
- ²⁸ Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of People* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984).

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Liberation Theology

We urge our readers to become familiar with the tenets of Latin American Liberation Theology as documented in J. Scott Horrell's concise synopsis of the writings of Leonardo Boff. Liberation theology has spread beyond Latin America, and it has clearly passed the stage of rarefied theological discussion in modernist seminars. Observers report that it is already eroding traditional Catholic belief among the common people, the "grandmothers and children" of Latin America. Liberation theology is also largely the rationale of certain idealistic Catholic religious (especially nuns) who, outraged at the dire poverty of most Latin American people and the corruption of their governments, support Marxist revolutionary terrorist movements which have already claimed the lives of Bible-believing Christians south of the border.

Upholding biblical creation is crucial to our warfare in this newest battle. For only upon the foundation of biblical creation can we confidently proclaim that the God we know and worship is apart from and above this created world; that He is a Person Who speaks to us from above and outside us, rather than an "intuition" or "latent feeling" within our own selves; that He clearly distinguishes between good and evil, loving the one, hating the other, that He gives us clear commandments which we must obey at pain of death; that His purpose for us is to be conformed to His own image and likeness, and to have dominion over the remainder of creation as His stewards; that He Himself initiated history and enters into it, so that our whole lives are and must be a waiting on and for Him in obedient, personally worshipful expectation. Mankind's fall into *sin* due to Adam's disobedience in paradise is also part of the biblical record of our beginnings; liberation theology, in denying the revealed truths of Scripture as "vulgar" and outmoded, denies the fact of sin — and hence the need for Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin.

The rise of liberation theology should spur us on to disseminate the good news of creation and abundant scientific evidences therefor more diligently

and joyfully than ever. All the arsenal of the worldwide creation science movement raised up by our Lord since the 1960s should be used to proclaim to lost and converted alike the bankruptcy of all anti-biblical theologies, and the ever again vindicated propositional truths of Scripture. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89).

The Bishop and the Prostitute

Jesus told the woman taken in adultery: "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more." (John 8:11) Liberation theology accepts the first part of this statement of Jesus and ignores the second.

This is illustrated by the following article which is published in the September 19 edition of LATINAMERICA PRESS:

In Praise of Liberton Theology

The recent controversy over liberation theology has been felt throughout the Latin American Catholic Church, but perhaps more strongly in Brazil than anywhere else (*L.P. May 30, 1985*). During a recent gathering organized by the Higher Institute of Religious Studies in Rio de Janeiro to express solidarity with Brazilian theologians Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, Gabriela Silvia Leite, a 34-year-old prostitute, read the following statement:

In July 1984 we prostitutes were invited to participate in the Fourth National Meeting of the Pastoral Commission on Marginated Women. It was during that five-day meeting that I discovered that we are not alone in our efforts to organize.

There I met bishops, priests and pastoral agents who called prostitution a social sin generated by economic, political and social structures. They insisted that because of this situation, we prostitutes must organize. Then we must unite our efforts with those of other oppressed sectors of society in order to advance together toward our liberation.

What, concretely, does this support from the church mean for us? For me and my companions, who have always been stigmatized and excluded by society, it means simply — and I want to emphasize this in capital letters — **REDISCOVERING OUR DIGNITY.**

It is because of this rediscovery of our own worth that I am now able to stand before you and speak out without feeling like a public sinner. For us, the theology of liberation is not just a label used to describe a new trend in Catholic thought; it is much more. It is a life project, grounded in faith. It offers proof that we prostitutes, by rediscovering the spiritual power contained in our religious belief, will also encounter a self-actualizing project that confirms our humanity; and we discover that we too are women.

That it is what my voice — and that of the five million prostitutes scattered throughout Brazil — wants to tell this gathering. With great assurance and great faith, I am able to say: many thanks to liberation theology, many thanks to all those theologians who have made it possible for us, the outcasts of society, to have access to the Gospel.

— Reprinted from *CACC Newsletter*, Director, Dr. Fred Schwarz, P.O. Box 890, Long Beach, CA 90801

The Real Liberation Theology

Edward Coleson

Perhaps no decent, middle-class American, Christian or otherwise, considers himself a greedy monster, who is prospering because millions are starving across the world today. In fact, he may hardly know that there are many in the Third World who think that he, that affluent American, is the cause of their poverty and even starvation.

Our typical American no doubt contributes to worthy causes and considers himself as rather the Good Samaritan and certainly not a Shylock, demanding "his pound of flesh." Yet J. Andres Kirk titles his chapter on Latin America in his book on liberation theology: "The Rich Man's Table Is the Poor Man's Grave" (*Theology Encounters Revolution*, p. 114).

Our self-image is so different from their opinion of us that one would never guess that we are the people they are talking about, if they didn't make that very clear. We are the culprits; there's no mistaking that! We might ignore their unkind remarks as idle gossip, except that the mounting tensions across the world are a threat to our survival too. Is there any way we can defuse the powder keg?

For those who have not kept up on these developments in the Third World, liberation theology came into being about 1970, a consequence of the frustration would-be reformers encountered in these impoverished lands. The landmark book in this new intellectual fashion was *Teologia de la liberacion, Perspectivas*, written by Gustavo Gutierrez and published in 1971. It was promptly translated into five other languages, including English, and more books of the same sort quickly followed.

The writers are all very critical of the prosperous nations, with the United States as the chiefest of sinners. They are also obviously and conspicuously pro-Marxist. Evangelicals of North America and also those "south of the border" who are acquainted with the problems firsthand have found it hard to relate to the group, because of their Communist commitment.

Needless to say, these left-wing theologians think that conservative Christians are the "priest and Levite" bypassing suffering humanity, while they are the good Samaritans. The two groups have not yet learned to communicate with each other.

One is impressed — or depressed — in reading the literature, that the liberation theologians seem to be unaware of any approach to their problems except that of the French Revolution of 1789 and the Communist Revolution of 1917. Both utterly failed to achieve their stated objectives, but produced a bumper crop of everything they were trying to escape from.

The French dethroned and executed an easygoing and incompetent king to make way for Napoleon, and the Russians got rid of their czar to provide a place

Dr. Coleson receives his mail at Manuel Texidor #1450, Santiago, Iglesias, Rio Piedras, PR 00921. Reprinted with the author's permission.

for Lenin and Stalin. The loss of life and freedom was great in both cases.

If one knew only of these tragedies, he would be convinced that liberation was utopian and impossible, a costly delusion that only makes a bad matter worse. Fortunately, that is not the case and we should be the ones to tell them.

Slavery, exploitation, and oppression are as old as mankind, but we human beings have had some success in bettering our conditions. One only needs to read the first half-dozen chapters of the Book of Daniel to have some understanding of the overwhelming power of an Oriental despot. We also find the foundation of freedom in the great book: "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:25) — in spite of what the U.S. Supreme Court says to the contrary.

The monarchs of the Near East were god-kings and there was no appeal from their decrees. This was not true of the Hebrews. "Even Solomon in all his glory" was not Jehovah, and God's chosen people knew this well.

Moving down closer to our own time, the English were wont to remind their tyrants that "the king is also under God and under the law." Few people see any connection between God and politics anymore, which has left the governments of our world free to work their will on us.

Of course, the liberation theologians can quote scripture, and do, although Marx was an atheist. They should not overlook the fact that the peoples of the Communist bloc have not yet discovered how to find freedom without God. Surely they ought to look elsewhere for the solution to their problems.

The story of how we in the United States, England, and a few other Western nations achieved a degree of political stability, liberty, and prosperity, which is now the envy of the world, should be no secret. In a large measure the good that we have known has been a by-product of our Christian faith.

To take one example only, the English disciples of John Wesley, such as William Wilberforce, were the leaders in the abolition of slavery, and the rest of the nations reluctantly followed the British example. But with the decline of our faith the world is again being enslaved.

Science helped to liberate us too. Many of the scientists back two or three centuries ago were devout Christians, men like Sir Isaac Newton, who believed that their research was "thinking God's thoughts after Him." They did their experiments "for the glory of God and the welfare of mankind." Their efforts bore much fruit. Poverty and famine were as common in Europe as they now are in the Third World, but an industrial, commercial, and agricultural revolution brought great improvements for us and some for them too. Science now threatens to destroy us.

The economic system of the European nations two or three centuries ago was irrational and repressive, designed to benefit the few with political power at the expense of the poor — just what our present economic system, national and international, is today, according to the liberation theologians. This was changed also. In the 1840s and '50s the English reordered their political and economic system, seeking to make the law of God their standard. This was the basis of British greatness during the long reign of Queen Victoria.

A Christian civilization is possible and it is the only way to achieve stability and freedom with a decent standard of living for all. But the world will not know this until we do. Since so many of these great reforms were a natural outgrowth of the Wesleyan Revival, we who come out of that tradition, as Dr. A. Wingrove Taylor says, "ought to be the real liberation theologians."

The Place of Nations in Biblical Creation

Ellen Myers

In our own generation ardent nationalist movements among ethnic minorities (for example, the French Québécois in Canada, the Flemish in Belgium, the Basques in Spain) and emergent peoples (chiefly in Africa) are at fundamental odds with a utopian humanist thought stream of "one-worldism" or cosmopolitanism. The one would make an independent state of every nation, no matter how small and traditionally or economically dependent on her present host nation; the other would downgrade and eventually eradicate national consciousness and identification altogether.

Neither position is in agreement with the Biblical creation perspective. This view of the place of nations in the world is correctly summed up in the following appraisal of nations by Russian Christian dissident Vadim Borisov:

In Christian thought the world is not simply the arithmetical sum of its visible parts, but a definite hierarchy, all of whose levels are personalized. This applies even to the structure of the life of the Deity, Whose mystery is embodied in . . . the Three Persons of the One God. . . . In Christ's time there were many peoples already existing on earth, occupying various territories, speaking various languages, and warring with one another. Was their appearance merely a historical accident? The words of the Bible about the "nations thou hast made" answer this question in the negative; the existence of peoples was part of the plan of creation, forming part of God's design for the world.

(Solzhenitsyn, 1975, pp. 208-209)

Borisov rightly begins with the Christian Trinity-in-Unity as the archetype of international relations. From this starting point—God Himself, in Whose image and likeness we human beings are made, as our model and pattern—and from it alone we can correctly infer that nations are meant by our Creator to live together and to complement each other in loving harmony, yet without surrendering their respective distinct "personalities," even as do the Three distinct yet Triune Persons of the Godhead. This, the Biblical creation view of international relations and the purpose for the existence of diverse nations, is of course but a "hierarchical" (to use Borisov's word) variation of the Biblical creation pattern for all human relations in general.

No other religion and no other world view can match Christianity in providing a model or archetype for interpersonal and international relations in the Godhead Itself. As C.S. Lewis writes, "[t]he Christian idea [of the Trinity] is the only one on the market (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 141)." Because they all reject the truth of the Trinity, none of them can look to an eternal pattern in the heavens (Hebrews 8:5) as a divine and unchanging norm for interpersonal or international relations. Whether Christless men insist upon a strictly "unitarian" God, denying the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit; whether they talk of

the hazy and bloodless "unknown God" of apostate modernism or "Christian" existentialism; whether they declare they themselves are God in the ancient gnostic or modern occult-"New Age" pantheist manner; or whether they are atheists — they must all depend on their own uncertain and biased imaginations in all thought and action including interpersonal/international relations. Hence they perennially sway from collectivism-tyranny to anarchy, from chauvinism to one-worldism; as Martin Luther aptly jested, unregenerate man is like a drunk riding a horse, first falling off the saddle to the right side, then to the left.

Often opposing views arise in reaction to each other and are fed by their opposition. Thus, modern nationalism arose in part as a reaction of Romanticism against the cosmopolitanism of the rationalist eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers. Modern nationalism is a perversion of Biblical creation-based national diversity. Modern one-worldism, in its turn a reaction to nationalism run amuck in World War I and Nazism, is a perversion of Biblical creation-based international harmony and cooperation. Both these movements, of course, arose without paying the slightest heed to the pattern set for international relations in the Trinity of the Biblical-Christian God.

The word "nations" first occurs in the Bible in Genesis 10. Here the families of the sons of Noah are listed "after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood" (Genesis 10:1-32). Although the word "nation" does not occur prior to Genesis 10, nations were in the Creator's original plan and purpose for developing mankind and did not result from the Fall and mankind's punishment through the Flood. Even as Levi was "in the loins of Abraham" when Abraham met and paid tithes to Melchisedec (Hebrews 7:9-10), so Noah's sons and latter descendants, the founders of the post-Flood nations, were in the loins of Noah — and originally in the loins of Adam when created by God. God's command to our first parents to be "fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28a), repeated to Noah after the Flood (Genesis 9:1, 7) entailed the origin of nations. Our Lord Jesus Christ's own genealogy by Mary (Joseph as his *supposed* father and as the son-*in-law* of Heli) traces His human ancestry to Judah (father of the nation of Judah), Noah's son Shem, and all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). Our Sovereign God does not deal in "contingencies" as all His works from the beginning of the world are known to Him (Acts 15:18).

Genesis 10 teaches us that nations originally arise from individual men and their families. Thus God promised Abraham, "I will make of thee a great nation" (Genesis 12:1-2), and gave him the new name Abraham because He had made him a "father of many nations (= "Abraham")" (Genesis 17:4-6). God promised Abraham that he would make a great nation of his son Ishmael (Genesis 17:20), and modern Arabs trace their national origin to Ishmael. God told Rebekah that in Esau and Jacob two nations were struggling in her womb (Genesis 25:23).

As nations grow, people from other families and nations may cast their lots with them. For example, "mixed multitudes" joined the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:38). Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, and all her family joined the Israelites, and Rahab became an ancestress of Christ (Matthew 1:5), as did Ruth the Moabitess, joining Naomi, her people and her God (Ruth 1:16-17, Ruth 4:13-22; Matthew 1:5). God's commandment against intermarriage of His chosen nation Israel with pagan nations (Exodus 34:12-

16) prefigures the separation of His chosen people and holy nation from among all nations (1 Peter 2:9) and is designed to help His people keep themselves pure in the one true *faith*. No considerations of maintaining "racial" or "national" purity — both unbiblical and factually nonsensical notions — are involved.* On the contrary, God "hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26).

In the sight of God their Creator all nations are "as a drop of a bucket" (Isaiah 40:15). God raises up nations and destroys them as He has determined in His eternal counsel. He is not a respecter of nations any more than of persons. This is why He warns His chosen nation Israel that if she disobeyed His voice she would perish just as "the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face" (Deuteronomy 8:20). The Apostle Peter recognized that "in every nation (not only Israel) he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:35). The nations that forget God "shall be turned into hell" (Psalm 9:17); the nations of the redeemed, on the other hand, will walk in the light of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem of eternity, and be healed by the leaves of the tree of life (Revelation 21:24; 22:2b). C.S. Lewis captures the essence of what is involved in God's eternal restoration and preservation of His national created identities when he writes in one of his justly beloved Narnia stories of "the England within England, the real England" in which "no good thing is destroyed" and which is but a spur "jutting out from the great mountains of Aslan [Christ]" (Lewis, *The Last Battle*, pp. 181,182). Lewis also views the work of redemption and restoration of God-created but fallen national identities as going on already here and now: "He doesn't make two blades of grass the same: how much less two saints, two nations, two angels. the whole work of healing Tellus [the earth] depends on nursing that little spark . . . which is still alive in every real people, and different in each" (Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, pp. 370).

That various nations do have different created identities or characters is also stated in the Bible. God not only made all nations of "one blood" but also determined "the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). Even as Jacob bestowed a different blessing and prophecy upon his sons and their descendants, (Genesis 49) so God has different, unique missions for the nations He raises up, such as "the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation" (Habakkuk 1:6). "The bounds of habitation," that is, the geographic location of a nation is evidently closely connected with its identity and character. God uses both genetic inheritance and environment to shape individual people and communities such as families, tribes and nations (a Biblical categorization, as evident, for example, in Joshua 7:14-17). With us His creatures who live in time the course of our lives unrolls as it were consecutively; with Him the Omniscient, Omnipotent Creator our end is known from before our beginning. In His book "all that pertains to us was written, which in continuance was fashioned, when as yet there was none of it" (Psalm 139:16). *All* that pertains to us was written in His book, including our own decisions and actions exercising stewardship or dominion over the works of His hands under Him, or in puny and futile rebellion against Him as the case may be. May we, like chastened Nebuchadnezzar king of great Babylon come to understand that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" and "praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride

he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:32b, 37).

Because God fashioned our nations, it is right to care for and love them much as we care for and love our parents, families and homes. The Psalmist of old exclaims, "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalm 137:4-6). The love of community, family, and nation is given us to reflect and train us for the love of the New Jerusalem, the community of the saints in eternity. They are mistaken who would have us discard this earthly reflection so we might either be wholly "otherworldly" already here or pay allegiance only to the ideal of transnational harmony. As God fashioned our nations, which will continue to exist even in eternity among the redeemed (nationality is an indelible part of our individual created identities), the harmony and mutual blessings between the nations which is His good will for them cannot and will not be achieved by *eradication* of nations. The great Russian Christian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky was right when he wrote in his notebook: "The *nation* is nothing more than the *national personality*" (Solzhenitsyn, p. 204). It is true that we must warn against love of our nation perverted to chauvinist pride, saying with British writer Rudyard Kipling (often accused of just this sin):

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart;
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard,
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not thee to guard,
For frantic boast and foolish word —
Thy mercy on thy people, Lord!

But a sweet, innocent love of the country and people among whom our lord has placed us in His good providence, a love of America as the "sweet land of liberty" and of its "rocks and rills, woods and temples hills;" a love, tender and perhaps fondly humorous, such as Agatha Christie's conversation between a traveling Englishwoman and a Russian lady who asks her personal questions and then, as she is met with hesitation, bursts out laughing: "Ah, but that is so English. You think it impertinent if I ask the questions that we Russians feel are so natural," (Agatha Christie, *Absent in the Spring*, p. 168) — such love is a childlike rejoicing in our nation as God's good gift to us. One aspect of love of nation pleasing to God the Maker of nations is rebuking of our nation's sins and calling for national repentance in the light of Scripture and in heartfelt grief. For with His nations too God in fatherly love would prefer not the death of the sinner but that he should turn from his sins and live, and to that end He raises up national watchmen (Ezekiel 3:4-21). It is a sign of godless arrogance, much evident, alas, in many contemporary Western "opinion leaders," to castigate one's own nation out of contempt for her mingled with "one-worldist" desire for her abolition. We must overcome the evil of which our

nations are guilty not with pharisaical, leveling evil of our own but with good, speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Academicians have taken note of the perennial rise of individual nations and attempted to systematize the factors in their development. In a voluminous and evenhanded study Hugh Seton-Watson states that "[m]any attempts have been made to define nations, and none have been successful" (Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, p.3). He also cites with some irony the would-be "scientific" definition of a nation by Joseph Stalin: "All that Stalin could say was that a nation must have four characteristics: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life and a common mental make-up. . . . Stalin mentioned neither religion nor historical tradition" (Seton-Watson, pp.3-4). Highlights in his work include very useful chapters on nations under the rule of other nations in multi-national states such as Austria-Hungary and Turkey before World War I, or diaspora nations (such as Armenians, overseas Chinese and overseas Indians), and on the development of national official languages (such as the "Langue d'oïl" of northern France which secured ascendancy over the southern French "Langue d'oc" by the Edict of Villers-Cotterets in 1539) (Seton-Watson, p.48). His chapters on emergent nations in East Asia and Africa (Seton-Watson, Chapters 7 and 8) are an excellent, concise contemporary history of nations being raised up by our Lord even as we are looking on.

Another excellent study is John A. Armstrong's *Nations Before Nationalism*, despite its tentative attempts to identify various "myths" as normative for the formation of nations (Armstrong does "emphasize the tentative nature of my formulations") (Armstrong, p.13). From the Biblical creation perspective we cannot agree with Armstrong's mentor Fredrik Barth, a Norwegian anthropologist, who proposes a "social interaction model of ethnic identity" rejecting a fixed character or essence for the "group" (nation) but focusing on the perceptions of its members of what makes them differ from other groups (Armstrong, pp.4-5). Armstrong then centers on nomadic and sedentary ways of life producing differing "nostalgias" of primeval states of bliss, the territorial (sedentary) versus the genealogical (nomadic) principles of European over against mid-Eastern nations, and the "Mesopotamian myth" of the polity (=organized community) "as a reflection of heavenly rule" (Armstrong, p.13 and Chapter 5). He believes that language is "rarely salient" in the formation of group identity in the prenationalist era (p.13 and Chapter 8); our emphasis from the Biblical creation perspective would be somewhat different in view of Biblical characterizations of nations "whose tongue thou shalt not understand" (Deuteronomy 28:49), and the confusion of the original single worldwide language at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11). Note, however, that the first mention of nations in Genesis 10 does not refer to different languages.

Armstrong places his entire work within the overall context of Christendom's struggle with Islam, emphasizing their border conflicts in Spain, the Balkans and also in Russia. He has a good discussion on the lasting influence of the Roman Empire's administration over many nations by way of good territorial organization, true also for the Greek model of city (polis) administration by way of the Byzantine Empire (pp.21-23). The rise of nations as successors of crumbling "cosmopolitan" empires is a pattern established initially at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) and predicted for latter history in Daniel 2.31-45, ending in the establishment of God's own kingdom which will

"stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

Two interesting works — Hans Kohn's *Nationalism* and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* — deal with the phenomenon of modern nationalism which claims that each nation should be as autonomous as possible. Kohn gives a brief history of the modern (chiefly nineteenth century) nationalist movement in Europe and then furnishes a fascinating collection of readings from twenty-four primary sources (including excerpts from Napoleon, Ernest Renan, Dostoyevsky, Richard Wagner, Mussolini, Nehru and Sun Yat-Sen). Factors of interest for the present discussion are a nation's sense of "messianism" or "manifest destiny;" economic productivity and territorial base; historical legends and traditions; cultural cohesiveness; attempts at supra-national ethnic ties (such as Pan Slavism or "Nordic/Teutonic" appeals); changes in political structure (such as the wane of feudalism); and the ambitions of individual leaders. Not all of these need to be strong, or even present, to make a nation. Gellner offers the following "Makeshift, temporary" definition:

[N]ations maketh man; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members. (Gellner, p.7)

This definition is correct from the Biblical creation perspective. Abraham became the father of the nation of Israel and of many nations because he responded to God's voice calling him out of Ur of the Chaldees. The sons and descendants of Noah fathered nations peopling the earth after the Flood by family-tribal cohesion reinforced (after their sinful, God-defying lapse into "one-worldism" at Babel) through linguistic separation. As happens universally and throughout history, members of foreign nations may sever their ties with their native countries to cast their lot and loyalty with others, as did Rahab and Ruth; America became and grew as a nation because huge numbers of immigrants from all over the world did just that. Nationality, in Scripture and in observed fact, is thus an attribute of individual men and women they may co-determine under God as part (but not the whole, and not the core) of their created identities.

This leads us to the conclusion that, after all, and as we always knew from the Biblical creation perspective, "the individual is not only more important but incomparably more important" than a nation (Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p.73). We, you and I, make choices about whether and what our nations, as part of ourselves, shall be. We, you and I, redeemed from or condemned among all nations, shall inherit the Father's Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world —or else depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:33, 41). It is by way of you and I that there will be nations in hell and nations in the New Jerusalem of eternity. Our nation, then, is part of our temporal and even eternal stewardship under God our Creator.

Note: "For an excellent, thorough study of "race" and marriage, see Thomas M. Brown, Jr., *Race and Interracial Marriage: A Biblical Survey and Perspective*, *Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (Fall 1984), pp.5-14.

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Where Did Love Fall?

David Haggith

Believing that Christian love is not an action borne of feelings but an action borne of the will, only makes loving others all the more difficult. Doing so says it is O.K. not to feel love for another human being — it is O.K. to feel nothing at all or even revulsion so long as we *act* in love. That in itself is characteristic of our fallen nature: inwardly we harbor hatred while outwardly we act in love. We ignore our feelings because we do not know how to change them. Acting the way we feel would surely be wrong. So, to keep from living a contradiction between heart and mind, we assure ourselves that Christian love — agape love — does not arise from feelings; it is simply a willful action. But the Bible never says agape is without feeling. In fact, it is the most feeling and compassionate of all loves.

Nevertheless, we despise the grizzled drunk but treat him with appropriate outward love. We feed him, bathe him, try to dry him out, and we despise him. We know our hearts are not right. We know we should be more compassionate, and we wonder why we cannot love all people as God does. We blame it on pride and conclude that if we reminded ourselves more frequently of our own fallen nature, we would have a more compassionate heart. We would not feel so high above the drunk, and so we would be able to minister to him more sincerely. Yet, so long as we do not *feel* love, our feelings will drag on our actions.

No one wants to receive willful love. Willful love is only testimony to the strength of the one loving. It says, "I don't feel you're worth my love, but God has told me to love you anyway." At best, it says, "I don't feel you're worth my love, but God has told me you are, and so I'll take his word for it." Love that is not supported by our feelings is patronizing. It does not offer much encouragement to the one loved if he knows that our love is coming from a determined action and not from a response within our hearts. I think it is time for Christians to quit excusing their feelings so easily.

Where did love fall? Someplace back in Eden. Once we chose not to trust in God, we lost trust in each other as well. In the end, God proved trustworthy, but we did not. For the first time we looked at our selves and did not like what we saw. Where there had been innocence and trust there was now guilt and suspicion. In our anger and humiliation love for each other eroded into revulsion, even hatred. Standing naked in front of each other, we saw dark and terrifying flaws we did not want exposed. We tried to cover them, but still we felt naked, and so we hid. We wanted our innocent love back, but the legacy of man is that we have never been able to trust each other enough to find it.

Quite frankly, our theology over the past centuries has perpetuated our difficulty in loving others from the heart. We have focused almost exclusively on the fallen nature of man. The result? The more we look at the fallen Adam, the man in the mire, the more revulsion we feel toward him. We've failed to recognize God's beautiful creation because we've chosen to focus on sin's

David Haggith receives his mail at 3233 Pinewood Ave. Bellingham, WA 98225

corruption. Spiritual hypochondriacs, we have microscopically observed our own infections and failed to view the whole person. As a result, we mistook the infection for the person.

If we identify ourselves according to our sins, we will identify others the same way. This is exactly what we have done. In fear of pride, we have focused on our depravity until we are almost consumed by it. We have missed seeing the awesome beauty of humanity because our fear of pride caused us to look the other way. To cure our cancer we ate more carcinogens. We tried to find good by focusing on evil.

True, the Bible tells us human nature is depraved, but it also says many good things about people. The Bible is balanced, but our lopsided theology has overlooked half the truth. We have dwelt for centuries on what the Bible says about the depraved side of human nature but glossed over all it has to say about the good side — the divine image embossed in every human being. The Bible says that God still loves his creation very much. Unless we are to assume God loves depravity, there must be more to humanity than our dark side. Since God loves what is good and hates what is evil, depravity cannot be an exhaustive definition of human nature.

As children, most of us were told at one time or another by one of our parents to look for the good in people — an acknowledgement that there is something good to be found in everybody. As we matured spiritually, we feared that acknowledging anything good about ourselves was pride. So, when we sang a song in church and someone told us we had a beautiful voice, we said it wasn't really us singing but God singing through us. At first this was probably an innocently misaimed desire to glorify God. Later we became secretly proud of the fact that we were humble enough to say it. Arrogantly humble, we began to put down all our natural abilities, claiming to be nothing, convinced that God was glorified by our wallowing. But it is unlikely that he was, because we were still focusing on ourselves instead of him.

For every credit we took off one side of the balance we added a burden to the other: whenever we did anything bad, we said, "Well, that's just human nature." So, human nature was always identified with evil. If it was good, it was God; if it was bad, it was us. By lowering ourselves, it appeared God grew higher in comparison. We believed the illusion and thought we were exalting him. Eventually we even discovered that focusing on our depravity made for great guilt motivation. And all this because we misunderstood what the Bible has to say about pride.

Pride — as the Bible speaks against it — is not a matter of thinking well of yourself. Paul did not say each one should think of himself as lowly as he can. He said, "Do not think of yourself *more highly* than you ought . . ." Nor did he say, "In humility consider yourself as worse than others." He said, "In humility consider others as better than yourself." Likewise, Paul did not say, "Despise yourselves below one another." He said, "Honor one another above yourselves." He even went so far as to say "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take *pride* in himself, without comparing himself to others (Gal. 6:4)." If we have tried to honor our neighbor by considering ourselves in the dregs, we have not gone very far toward lifting him up. At best we have only made him top dreg. By sinking ourselves, others have been sucked down in the vacuum behind us.

Pride, in the arrogant sense that the Bible denounces, is seeing ourselves as

better than we truly are — having an overinflated opinion of ourselves — or seeing ourselves as more significant than someone else. Man's spiritual pride is seeing himself as more significant than God. But to avoid such arrogance we needn't fall to the other extreme. We do not need to prove our love to God through the deep personal sacrifice of self-annihilation. In arrogance, we dance in the devil's hand. In base humility, we grovel in his hand. Neither is appropriate for a child of God.

How does all this apply to loving people? We cannot feel love for something we have been taught all our lives to despise. We have been taught that mankind is wretched — half of a Biblical truth. Without the balancing portion of the truth, we will always see ourselves and others in that way only. As a result, we will never be able to love with the true feeling and compassion of agape love. We cannot give what we do not possess. If we do not love being human ourselves, we cannot love others who are also human. Ironically, it is not only our sinfulness that keeps us from deeply loving people, but also our theology, in that it focuses our attention primarily on our sinfulness. Perhaps it is an outcome of the darker side of our nature that even our theology is distorted. We have come to see all people as spiritually evil. God sees them as spiritually corrupted. There is a big difference.

To be totally depraved means only that every aspect of our divine image has been corrupted by the fall and not that every aspect of that image has been destroyed. When we talk about Abraham Lincoln being a better man than Adolf Hitler, we are acknowledging that there are degrees of corruption in humanity — that some people live farther from the devil than others. If it is true that some people could be worse than they are, then they cannot be totally bad. Even the devil knows he has not succeeded in turning people evil. If he had, he would not have to keep trying so fervently. There is something of God's divine image still visible in all of us, something he wishes to redeem — that is, to restore to its original splendor.

The Bible confirms that it is special to be human. Only after God created mankind, did he call all that he had made *very good*. The Bible identifies sin as an *intruder* in our nature. Therefore, sin is not the basis for our identity. It is the corruption of it. As a born-again Christian, Paul said, "It is no longer I who sin, but sin that lives within me."

Some conclude from this that the Biblical basis for human worth is being a child of God: "It is not what you are but whose you are." That sounds good, but it leaves us with no basis for valuing those who are not yet children of God (in the adopted sense). In truth, becoming a child of God only reaffirms that value God has created in all human beings — their intrinsic worth. The purchase price tells us the value of an object.

All people are valuable because they are of God's coinage — stamped with his image — though long out of mint condition. That is what God sees and wishes to redeem. He created us as creatures genuinely worthy of his love, by giving his own image, and then he let us decide whether or not we would love him in return. Martin Luther stated "God's love does not love that which is worthy of being loved, but it creates that which is worthy of being loved." Luther meant that until we are redeemed by Christ we are not worthy of his love, but that God creates something worthy of his love through redeeming us. The truth, however, goes beyond that. God created something worthy of his love from the very beginning.

When Luther was thinking of our being worthy of God's love, he was thinking of worthiness in respect to our goodness — our good works: and so, of course, he did not think we came into God's love being worthy of it. But love is never earned. It is always a gift. We are worthy of God's love not because of what we do, but because of our created identity.

Human value exists in the intricacies of God's creation — a value he has given us whether we are Christians or not, whether we choose to love him, deny him, or hate him. One of God's unconditional gifts to all people was the beauty he created in them. The credit goes to God, the joy and thrill to the hearts of his people. We delight in the grandeur of his mountains. We should delight no less in the pinnacle of his creation. God created something he deemed too precious to see destroyed.

The tragedy of the image bearers is this: They were intimately crafted by the hand of God into superb beauty, but each moment of their lives is bought with another wrinkle. They purchase time with a little death. They busy themselves creating, then must watch all their creations decay. They were created with great aspirations, and so they dream; but when they awaken their dreams dissolve. They fill their world with music and love to sing but often find themselves with little to sing about; and so the music fades, and the words echo with hollow sound. They have enormous curiosity to explore but then do not understand what they have discovered. Their spirits rise with hope and eager ambition, but they do not know what they are hoping for. They are created with a noble pride, which either inflates to arrogance or withers to despair. They reach for joy and cling to sorrow. They are created to love and with desire to be loved, to fill the earth and rule over it, to know their creator and walk with him. They are created for intimacy with God, but do not know it.

So, God's unconditional gift to us was ourselves, created with a multitude of beautiful qualities and grand ambitions, created such that he will always love us and desire us for his own. In giving so freely to us, he opened himself to a world of hurt, because, in return, we defied him. Now his conditional gift to us is himself — the only condition being that we believe and accept.

Our theology has often skimmed over this side of being human. We have been taught, instead, to become hollow vessels, rather than free creative personalities who can respond to God in love. We have gone so far as to preach that if we empty ourselves of all personal worth, Christ will be glorified and enter us more fully. Seeing what independence from God has done to us, we have tried to force feed ourselves with dependence by deflating ourselves to nothing. Our logic has been that if being overinflated is bad, being underinflated must be ideal. But our dependence on God should not be a negative thing — something we strive for by making ourselves even more dependent. It is merely a fact we live with. If we ignore our dependence on him, we stray from him. On the other hand, if we try to increase it, we are throwing away all the strength he has already given us, and with it, all the joy of his gifts.

Humility can be either positive or negative. If we put others above ourselves, it is positive; it lifts others up. If we pull ourselves down, it is negative; we have turned our attention on ourselves and entirely missed God's point. Christ did not go around debasing himself. He did not make his life a drink offering, poured out and wasted in the dirt. He poured out his life *on us* as an anointing oil. When we try to empty ourselves in order for Christ to fill us, we pour our offering in the dirt. Christ does not ask us to become nothing. That is only

Christian asceticism. What he does ask is that we give everything he has given us to the poor. Christlike humility is a pouring out for the sake of others, not merely for the sake of emptying ourselves. Nor does God delight in breaking the spirits of his people. He does it only when in arrogance they have forgotten him (Jeremiah 48). Our spirits are made to soar, but to soar with him.

Why do we find it difficult to feel *agape* in our hearts? Perhaps because we have not seen the people God created in the full light of his perfect word.

Book Reviews

(continued from page 32)

atheists (a look at Romans 1 tells us that the atheistic rejection of God merits hell). Short's arguments pack logical errors and biblical misinterpretations tighter than sardines. God is sentimentalized, sin sugar coated, and justice smothered. Despite some of Short's interesting cultural insights, his theology is more preferential (believing what he prefers) than biblical (believing the Bible). His attempt at cultural apologetics thus becomes cultural accommodation. The reality policemen have arrested and jailed him, handcuffing his biblical discernment.

On the contrary, **The Religion of the Force** serves several constructive purposes. First, it gives a simple lesson on how to uncover a film's basic world-view. Many Christian viewers never even reach this stage. (For instance, for all the attention given to the character Yoda in the "The Empire Strikes Back" few people realized that he was in essence a Zen-master or guru.) Second, it gives a needed rebuke to Christians whose theology is so weak that they see the religion of the Force as the religion of Jesus Christ. Third, it makes an excellent evangelistic tool — short, simple, and direct. The gospel of Christ is contrasted with the gospel of Lukas.

Although the book is short and aesthetically spartan, it is a good primer on cultural apologetics — like Geisler's similar booklet on Carl Sagan, **Cosmos: Carl Sagan's Religion for the Scientific Mind** (Quest, 1983). As Paul did in Athens, this book confronts false religion with gentleness, wisdom, and truth.

— *Reviewed by Douglas Groothuis*

Attitudes About Nature and Society: Our Darwinian Legacy

Ralph E. Ancil

From about the sixteenth century onward, and especially during the so-called "Enlightenment", there was a growth in secular, non-Christian ideas. Philosophers espoused rationalism: the belief that man can understand everything without God or divine revelation; and naturalism: the belief that there is nothing of supernatural significance in man in either thought or deed. Politically, rulers embraced the notion of the "Divine Right of Kings" which was a return to pagan deification of the state and a rejection of the Christian concept which places the king under God and His law. Such absolutist thinking increased and centralized governmental power which included the accumulation of wealth. This resulted in territorial expansion, international conflicts and was, generally, a period of economic and material interests.¹ A bifurcation of thought occurred in the sciences as a growing number of secular thinkers tried to break the strong, natural alliance of science and religion and, unlike its Christian founders, began linking science with a secular perspective in which the world was seen as a materialistic machine governed, not by a caring and sustaining God, but by impersonal autonomous "laws."

By the 19th century, then, a secular world view had become firmly entrenched in key areas of thought. It was in this historical setting that Charles Darwin published in 1859, his now famous book *The Origin of Species by Natural Selection or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Although other writers had presented essentially evolutionary ideas before him, Darwin's emphasis on natural selection gave his explanation the appearance of "scientific" validity²: it was materialistic and mechanistic and thus suited the age.

The Response of Some 19th Century Philosophers

The Darwinian concept of the "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest" would suggest, it would seem, that nature is cold and implacable. Was there room for the individual or for a benevolent, transcendent God? Russett³ characterizes the matter this way:

"(Darwinism) destroyed the traditional reliance of orthodox religion on the works of nature as evidence of the hand of God. It destroyed, just as surely, the transcendentalists' conduit of divinity. For the benevolent, spirit-impregnated nature of the transcendental vision it substituted an iron maiden presiding over endless panoramas of anguish and extinction. The serene cosmic pattern was replaced by the blind movement of

Ralph E. Ancil receives his mail at 1119 Kimberly Dr., #4, Lansing, MI 48912

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mindless forces eternally sifting and shaping all living things, men as well as the lowliest mollusk, toward ends unperceived and perhaps nonexistent. Assaulting the optimistic democratic faith in the worth of the individual, Darwinism disclosed a slaughter of the innocents sanctioned, as it seemed, by a nature concerned with the preservation not of the individual but of the type."

One of the most enthusiastic proponents of the Darwinian view was Herbert Spencer, an English engineer turned philosopher. Spencer attempted to apply Darwin's concepts to society in general and advocated strict laissez faire economics. He portrayed man's economic role as a struggle against nature. In fact, Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" in a paper on human population.⁴ This application of Darwinian concepts is generally referred to as Social Darwinism. Spencer's influence on American intellectual thought was profound. Russett⁵ writes:

"Serious philosophers, among them James, Dewey, and Royce, had to clear their paths of Spencer before proceeding on their own way. He was one of the founders of the new study of society called sociology, and theorists as widely divergent as Lester Frank Ward and William Graham Sumner turned to him for guidance. At the level of popular culture his presence was similarly inescapable. He served as the common man's Darwin, proffering the intellectual certainties of Darwinism on a cosmic scale, without Darwin's scientific rigor."

As a result of this philosophy, a controversy arose over whether or not free will existed. Two of Spencer's disciples split over this issue. One was William Graham Sumner who subscribed to the deterministic school of thought: man was the imp of nature, the victim of uncontrollable forces. He taught that all mankind lived under the inexorable law of the struggle for survival of the fittest. Indeed, the primary struggle was of individuals fighting to win the means of subsistence from nature⁶:

"Nature broods over Sumner's universe like a savage matriarch, bestowing boons and buffets with contemptuous indifference. She is a 'hard mistress', an 'opponent' against whom men strive for the means of subsistence. There are no gifts in this world: nothing is gotten without pain. Men 'wrestle' with nature to 'extort' from her what they need."

Lester Frank Ward's attitude was somewhat different, namely, he believed in indeterminism; man was not controlled by nature, rather nature was to be used by man. This was due to the evolution of mind which gave man supreme power⁷:

" 'An entirely new dispensation has been given to the world. All materials and forces of nature have been thus placed completely under the control of one of the otherwise least powerful of the creatures inhabiting the earth . . . Nature has thus been made the servant of man.' "

Ward advocated an aggressive reform policy for society guided entirely by scientific foresight. He believed that man could and should transform the environment on behalf of man. The scientist and technologist should use nature to provide for the well-being of the masses.

As the Civil War started and the United States found herself shouldering these troubles as well as those of industrial expansion and urbanization, the concepts of Darwin added another disturbing element. Russett⁸ writes:

As early as 1861, Charles Eliot Norton, the Brahmin conservative, had

been moved to reflect on the likenesses between the Civil War and the war of nature, both painful, both costly in untimely death, and untoward suffering, yet both essential to true progress. Taken simply at face value, Norton mused, Darwinian ideas tended to promote a harsh view of life: 'Nature is careless of the single life. Her processes seem wasteful, but out of seeming waste, she produces her great and durable results. Everywhere in her works are the signs of life cut short for the sake of some effect more permanent . . . 'Wastefulness, strife, warfare, suffering, death — these were, so Darwin himself had concluded, essential elements in the progress of organic life as a whole . . . "

And later he adds:⁹

"In private, Darwin gave expression to bleaker views (than what he had expressed in the *Origin*): 'What a book a devil's chaplain might write,' he exploded to Hooker, 'on the clumsy wasteful, blundering, low and horribly cruel works of nature!'

Clearly, the Darwinian view of evolution included a necessary hostility to nature. Nature was viewed as cruel, powerful and wasteful; only the species, not the individual, mattered. It was an opponent against which man must struggle to survive. And yet all this was the way of life and progress.

The Naturalist Writers

American literature of the latter part of the 19th century was characterized by a certain kind of writing called naturalism which stressed the animality of man. Its proponents were quite popular and their works were widely read. It emphasized the fatalistic view of Darwinism called "scientific" determinism. Among its proponents were Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, Henry Adams, and Theodore Dreiser. These men strongly influenced 20th century writers including Robert Frost, Edwin Arlington Robinson, William Faulkner and John Steinbeck. In this section we will examine three representative authors of naturalism and highlight their attitude to nature, namely, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, and Frank Norris.

One of the most famous advocates of Darwinism was Jack London. One source ¹⁰ writes:

"From Social Darwinism London had absorbed the idea that to survive, man must adapt to irresistible natural forces and to 'the stress and strain of life, its fevers and sweats and wild indulgences.' . . . from Nietzsche he borrowed the idea of the super human . . . From Marx he took the idea of the need for social reform and the power of economic determinism . . . "

His stories *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906) depict "man and beast struggling against the overwhelming forces of nature."¹¹

In the story of *The Law of Life*, London depicts not only man's necessary combat with the environment, but also the absence of meaning for the individual. Throughout the struggle, the individual has only one purpose, one obligation or law to obey: to reproduce to sustain the species:¹²

"Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law was death."

Regarding man's environment London states:¹³

"Nature was not kindly to the flesh. She had no concern for that concrete thing the individual. Her interest lay in the species, the race . . . But one

task she set the individual. Did he not perform it, he died. Did he perform it, it was all the same, he died. Nature did not care; there were plenty who were obedient, and it was only the obedience in this matter, not the obedient, which lived and lived always."

London perpetuated the view that for man to survive he must fight his environment. Ultimately, of course, nothing mattered anyway. London suffered from alcoholism, mental disintegration and died most likely by his own hand at the age of 40.¹⁴ London, like so many other Darwinian evolutionists, was an Anglo-American racist.¹⁵

Theodore Dreiser read widely in the evolutionary writings of Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer. He eventually lost his religious faith and was left with the deterministic belief that "man was a mechanism moved by chemical and physical forces beyond his control."¹⁶ Two of his most famous books, *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), portrayed promiscuous, degenerate lives; the latter book was even modelled on the lives of his sisters. His characters reveal that the author's attitude to man was dark and chaotic. His characters were "haunted by poverty" and "helpless in the clutch of relentless fate".¹⁷

Commenting on Dreiser, Russett¹⁸ writes:

"Dreiser understood that society needed to be conceived as an *extention of nature*, that a close analysis of the forces of social life would show that civilization, whatever its complexities, was no stranger to the *law of tooth and claw*." (emphasis added)

In other words the individual's struggle against his natural environment became extended to his struggle against his artificial environment, society.

Frank Norris (1870-1902) was influenced by his brief stay at Harvard and by the French literary world. He eagerly absorbed LeConte's lectures on evolution and seemed especially interested in the elements of man's animal nature. Like many others, Norris was caught up in the general enthusiasm for the idea of evolution during his years at Berkeley. He wrote of individuals "moved by powers they could not control and only rarely understood."¹⁹

In *McTeague* (1899), for example, he emphasized the animality of man: an element of his evolutionary past which was always just beneath the surface. In *Vandover and the Brute* (1914) he tells the story of a man's decline into drunkenness and sexual immorality and how he becomes a mental and physical wreck. Norris was almost obsessed with this bestiality, a preoccupation of all those who interpreted Darwin to mean that the animal ancestry of man left a beast beneath the skin who could explode at any moment. In *Octopus* (1901) Norris tells a tale of California wheat ranchers battling the railroad. And, according to Russett, Norris offers a religious system of thought with Nature in the place of God. Norris describes it:

"Nature was, then, a gigantic engine, a vast cyclopean power, huge, terrible, a leviathan with a heart of steel, knowing no compunction, no forgiveness, no tolerance . . ." ²⁰

By and large, then, naturalist writers spread the message of Darwin and Spencer. They stressed the animality of man and suggested that he was controlled by the evolutionary forces of nature which were beyond his control.²¹

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Book Reviews

Norman Geisler and J. Yutaka Mano, **The Religion of the Force** (Dallas, Texas: Quest Publications, 1983). 61 pages, \$2.00

Bob Short, **The Gospel from Outer Space** (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983). 96 pages; \$5.95

Christians must be socially alert and discerning if they hope to wrestle effectively with the forces that shape the modern mind. The shapers of the modern mind in our day are often movie producers; they and others enforce their viewpoints through popular culture, functioning as what sociologist Peter Berger calls "reality policemen." This demands thus a cultural apologetic that pays close attention to popular culture. And what could be more popular than the Star Wars movies or E.T.?

The task of cultural apologetics is to interpret and challenge the ideas of society biblically. It seeks legitimate common ground with culture while spotlighting the antithesis between Christianity and its numerous counterfeits.

The Religion of the Force explains, illustrates, and analyzes "the religion of the force," by referring both to the films and to producer George Lukas's personal comments. The films are shown to be purposely religious, but not Christian. The Force is impersonal and limited in power; God is personal and omnipotent. The Force has a light and dark side; in God there "is no darkness whatsoever". One approaches the Force through feeling not reason; God says "let us reason together." In the religion of the force all are saved (universalism); the Bible highlights the perils of eternal hell. Salvation is found by finding the Force within; the Bible speaks of sin dwelling within. The Force can be controlled; God is without a counselor.

But the authors are not being theological killjoys. The religion of the Force is essentially Eastern pantheism and not Christianity, and the booklet shows a connection between Lukas and his films and the occult philosophy of Carlos Castaneda. As some of the most popular and successful movies of all time, these films have influenced millions and have created their own culture. They should not be ignored or viewed as simple entertainment. Neither should they be gullibly interpreted as Christian analogies (as does Bob Short in **The Gospel From Outer Space**). Rather they must be subjected to a Christian cultural apologetic that sharply divides truth from error.

Unfortunately, another attempt at cultural apologetics is not this successful. Robert Short's previous books on the theology of Peanuts charmed us so that we forgave his hints of theological liberalism. He saw an implicit Christian theology in cartoons and made it explicit. Now he finds theology in the movies Star Wars, Superman, E.T. and others. But the theology he finds often ends up taking precedent over the Bible.

But Short finds more than analogies between the films and Christianity. He sees films like E.T. and Star Wars as theological correctives. E.T. shows us more love than Christians who preach hell. Short embraces the universalism of "the religion of the Force," and says that the doctrine of hell produces

(continued on page 26)

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EDITORIAL	page 1
LETTERS AND COMMENTS	page 2
ANNOUNCEMENTS	page 4
<i>Christian Media and Art's Video Tapes</i>	
<i>Creationist Materials for Catholics</i>	
LEONARDO BOFF AND THE LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY MOVEMENT	page 6
<i>J. Scott Horrell</i>	
THE REAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY	page 13
<i>Edward Coleson</i>	
THE PLACE OF NATIONS IN BIBLICAL CREATION	page 15
<i>Ellen Myers</i>	
WHERE DID LOVE FALL?	page 22
<i>David Haggith</i>	
ATTITUDES ABOUT NATURE AND SOCIETY: OUR DARWINIAN LEGACY	page 27
<i>Ralph E. Ancil</i>	
BOOK REVIEWS	page 32
<i>Norman Geisler and J. Yutaka Mano: The Religion of the Force</i>	
<i>Bob Short: The Gospel from Outer Space</i>	

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